

APPENDIX C: GENDER ASSESSMENT



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the fall of communism in 1989, Romania has struggled through severe economic and social hardships. Unemployment is high, poverty rates have doubled, GDP has declined, and health indicators have fallen. Recently, however, substantial improvements have been made. Economic growth has increased, free and fair elections have been held, and maternal mortality has been halved. USAID/Romania has made substantial contributions in all of these areas. USAID/Romania is currently planning its new strategy for the coming five years, determining how it will build on these successes and help address some of the remaining problems in the country. This assessment is part of this strategic planning process, analyzing how gender relations and roles affect the achievement of USAID's objectives and assessing how the proposed activities affect the relative status of men and women in the country.

As a result of this assessment it is clear that USAID/Romania has been and continues to be committed to ensuring the promotion of equal rights and opportunities for women and disadvantaged groups in the country. There have been numerous programs and successes in all three strategic objective areas that have specifically addressed gender discrepancies. For example, in the area of economic growth, USAID and its partners are aware of and support credit opportunities for women business owners. USAID funded a study of women's entrepreneurship which has provided extensive baseline data on women's involvement in business in Romania. USAID is also funding an activity that has a mandate to specifically target and support women's business associations. In the democracy sector USAID has funded workshops to develop women's involvement in political parties, has supported training and networking opportunities for women activists, and provided internship opportunities for youth. The progress made in the area of reproductive health has also been quite impressive. Maternal mortality has been halved, abortion rates have declined dramatically, and more men and women are aware of and using modern contraceptives.

Although the past progress is commendable, there are still areas in all three strategic objectives of USAID's program in Romania, as well as in the special interest area of combating domestic violence and trafficking, that could benefit from gender analysis and integration. Below is a summary of the main issues uncovered in the assessment. More detailed descriptions and extensive recommendations are provided in the main body of this report.

SO 1.3 – Accelerated Private Sector Growth

Legal, Regulatory and Bureaucratic Reform: USAID has funded an extensive study of the bureaucratic constraints on private enterprise. Future activities will focus on streamlining these processes in order to improve the business environment. Women and men sometimes experience differences in dealing with bureaucratic processes. These potential differences have not yet been investigated in Romania. An assessment of these differences may help to shape the streamlining efforts to ensure that improvements address the issues faced by both male and female entrepreneurs.

Pension Reform: Changes in the pension system, designed to make the system more sustainable, may have an unanticipated negative impact on women. The move to a system

based on contributions decreases women's benefits due to their fewer years of employment and lower salary histories. Women under the new system will continue to have lower retirement ages. Fewer years of contributing to the system combined with data that indicates women on average earn 83% of men will result in women having lower average pensions than men. More worrying, however, is the increase in the number of women moving from formal, paid employment to the informal sector or into unpaid family labor – situations in which it is unlikely that contributions will be made into the social, health or pension systems, resulting in a growing number of women potentially facing old age without pensions at all. Although many of these women have husbands on whose pensions they can rely while he is living, survivor benefits are significantly lower (50%); and women on average live longer than men resulting in more women relying on these reduced benefits. If these issues are not addressed before the reforms are finalized, there could be serious implications for elderly women in Romania in the near future.

Business Associations: Data indicates that although women are slightly underrepresented in association management, they are actively involved with associations at other levels. Associations, therefore, provide a potential outlet for promoting women's civic participation, as well as improving their business skills. Additional support for women entrepreneurs could be provided through these associations. Developing additional programs, such as mentoring programs for women's business associations and gender integration training for other business associations (to help them understand and address the needs of both their male and female members) could build on and develop women's involvement in this sector.

Water Users Associations: This is part of a new agricultural development activity designed to promote the development of water users associations to take over private ownership of irrigation assets and develop cooperative marketing and distribution networks amongst small landholders. As the associations are developed, USAID needs to be sure that efforts are made to ensure that both men and women know about the purpose of the program, when meetings are being held, and why they should attend. USAID should also make sure that implementers learn what both male and female land holders' concerns are, that efforts are taken to accommodate men's and women's different schedules, and that women have an equal voice in the associations' decision-making processes.

Credit for SMEs: Although thirty-one percent of USAID's loans go to businesses owned by women, data indicates that women borrow significantly less than men for their businesses. Most of USAID's credit implementers provide credit through local associations. In order to encourage the development of the associations, loans are available only to members of the associations. Although USAID's partners are conscious of the need to ensure their practices do not discriminate against women, most of them collect sex-disaggregated data only on the number and value of loans disbursed and the number of jobs created. Additional data that might be useful in analyzing whether any of the lending practices discourage or encourage women are not collected, such as application rates, approval and denial rates, and repayment rates, membership of the association, and an analysis of the associations' decision-making processes.

Agricultural Development: This is part of the new agricultural development activity designed to increase farmers access to credit through the development of crop insurance programs and warehouse receipts systems. Although both of these programs should assist all farmers, male

and female, some steps can be taken to ensure that men and women are included in program participation and in decision-making processes to the greatest extent possible. Simple steps such as advertising the program in places where women frequently go and scheduling meetings during times when women are free of housework and childcare duties can help encourage women's participation. Implementing organizations should also analyze men's and women's farming practices to see if there are differences in crop preferences, equipment usage, or access to distribution systems, which might affect their access to or interest in the program.

Land Privatization: Land privatization in Romania is based on restitution of nationalized land to its prior owners. USAID's involvement in the privatization of the remaining 20% of state-owned lands is limited. USAID will be encouraging those with private claims to the remaining land to sell those claims in an effort to consolidate land ownership into larger parcels, increasing the efficiency and competitiveness of the agricultural sector. To ensure that there are no gender discrepancies, the activity needs to study the concerns of both male and female holders of land claims and ensure that public awareness campaigns address the needs of both. The activity should also examine property rights of family members to ensure that the processes developed to encourage the sale of land claims protect the rights of family members.

SO 2.3 – Improved Democratic Governance at the Local Level

Local Government Assistance: Women are significantly under-represented in local governments in Romania. Several reasons for this were uncovered including an abundance of housework and family duties that leaves no time for public service; negative public attitudes towards women's ability to lead; a reluctance of women to submit themselves to public scrutiny; discomfort at involving themselves in under-the-table dealings; and political parties' resistance to promoting women to positions of leadership. USAID is developing a new program to improve democratic governance at the local level, including budgeting and public management, municipal finance and credit, economic development, citizen participation, and citizen information and association building. Improving local governance brings governance closer to the people thereby increasing citizens' participation in decision-making. Men and women in the same communities often have different concerns and priorities for their local government. It is critical, therefore, that gender issues are taken into consideration in the design of these activities so that women's voices are heard. Activity designs need to include provisions to ensure that local budgets reflect the priorities of men and women in the community, that women participate in discussions of local economic development for their communities, that information disseminated by government reaches both men and women, and that associations reach out to and include both male and female members.

Political Parties: Women are under-represented not only at the local level, but also at the national level of governance. As noted above, it is very difficult for women to work their way up the political party system, thereby gaining positions of authority and leadership. USAID/Romania is currently implementing programs that target some of these problems. Implementing partners are working with women in political parties to develop their skills, young party members, including men and women, have been sent on study tours to develop their understanding of political party systems, and universities students have been supported in internship programs with the government. Additional support for increasing women's roles

in political parties, at the local level, will increase women's voices in local government, thereby improving democratic governance. USAID could encourage political parties to be more transparent in their internal processes; train party leadership in the importance of including women in the party structure and how they can use this to attract women voters; and continue to support additional training activities for women party members and activists to continue to build their skills so that they will be ready to assume leadership when the opportunities arise.

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs): Although women are also underrepresented at the management level of CSOs, they are actively involved in CSO activities throughout the country. As in other countries of the region, CSOs are beginning to develop from purely charity based organizations to voices of advocacy, providing another way for citizens to influence governmental decision-making. Aside from the business associations discussed above, USAID/Romania is supporting CSOs mainly through partnership programs with both US and Serbian CSOs. Although partnership grants do not currently require applicants to address gender issues, many of them have. One partnership program initiated a seminar to educate Romanian and Serbian female political activists on networking, lobbying, and advocacy strategies – attracting significant media interest in the process. Other grants have included gender integration strategies, for example, by using participatory approaches to community development efforts, but neglected to keep track of and report on men's and women's relative participation in and results from the projects. Future partnership activities should ask applicants to identify the relevant gender issues and describe how they will address them. Because of women's significant role in CSOs, additional support for CSOs could provide an important outlet for women's political participation. Training for staff and management in gender integration issues, partnerships and internships with more advanced CSOs, and other activities could be helpful in developing the more nascent organizations and promoting women's leadership roles in the more developed ones.

Labor Unions: Labor unions have provided an important forum, both at the local and national level, for promoting human rights in Romania, especially women's rights in the workplace. Because many of the largest unions are in female dominated sectors, such as education and health, women have been activity involved. Three Labor Resource Centers, opened with USAID funding, have developed special women's programs to address some of the workplace issues of concern to female employees, such as sexual harassment and gender discrimination in hiring practices. Activities organized at the local level have led to important changes at the national level. Continued support for labor unions could provide an important outlet for women's civic participation and for promoting women's rights. In addition, support for partnerships or collaborative efforts between the more advanced labor unions and other CSOs in the communities could help develop the CSOs' advocacy skills.

Ethnic Relations Program: USAID/Romania is in the process of developing a new activity to support the Roma community in Romania. Roma in Romania have distinctly lower human development indicators than the general population: lower literacy rates, higher unemployment, and lower health indicators. They are reported to be victims of discrimination in hiring practices and even at health clinics. This activity will support efforts to provide the Roma with social and economic opportunities equal to the rest of the population. Roma culture is very traditional with distinct roles for men and women. Once it is clear what sorts of activities will be supported, it is very important that the new activity conduct an in-depth

gender analysis of the Roma population. USAID/Romania's reproductive health programs already have significant experience working with the Roma population. They have developed special interventions that have been successful in addressing the significant reproductive health problems of Roma women. Lessons learned from their experience should be incorporated into this new activity.

SO 3.4 – Improved Effectiveness of Selected Social and Primary Health Care Services for Targeted Vulnerable Groups

Reproductive Health: Communist-era pro-natalist policies making both birth control and abortion illegal had a devastating effect on the reproductive health of Romanian women. In the past decade, the GOR and USAID/Romania have had commendable success in improving the reproductive health of the population. Maternal mortality has been halved; abortion rates have declined; and people's awareness and use of modern contraceptives is increasing. USAID-funded activities have also had successes in targeting particularly vulnerable populations such as the Roma communities and adolescent girls. Some work has begun to focus reproductive health messages on men. More activities targeted to men could help bring about greater increases in knowledge and use of modern methods of contraception, further decreasing the abortion rate, improving maternal mortality and reducing the number of children entering institutions.

Health Reform: The former system of cradle to grave services for all citizens is no longer sustainable. The health care system is currently transitioning to a system of mandatory payroll contributions to a national health insurance program, financial incentive schemes for health care providers, and social services and transfers based on income testing. Individuals and families not covered by their employer may make voluntary contributions to the program or pay fees for services rendered. The revised unemployment insurance program will provide health insurance coverage for the unemployed, but for a limited time only. People not included in any of these categories and unable to pay for their own coverage can apply to the government for a poverty certificate, which entitles them to free services. However, many of the poor do not know how, or are unable, to obtain a poverty certificate and find themselves without access to health care. Although these reforms affect both men and women, women are particularly vulnerable for many reasons: they are more likely than men to work in sectors which do not make social insurance contributions (such as unpaid family workers or workers in the informal sector) and they are more likely to face long-term unemployment.

Institutionalized Children: USAID has funded extensive programs to address issues of children left to the care of the state. During the Communist era, families were encouraged to have children. Yet many could not afford to care for these children and turned to state-run institutions to provide for them. USAID activities have focused on preventing unwanted pregnancies (see reproductive health above); developing alternatives to institutional care such as adoption and foster care; and providing counseling, economic and material support for families to help them keep their children at home. These programs have met with considerable success. Although the number of children being turned over to the state is still rising, the number being placed in institutions is declining and the number entering foster care on the rise. Sex-disaggregated data about these children was unavailable. Without data it is impossible to know if they are gender-based differences or preferences in the rates at which children are turned over to the state or the rates at which they are adopted or taken into foster care. Additional studies of institutionalized children after they reach independence

could also provide valuable information. Some of those working with these children felt that the girls are particularly vulnerable, are often taken advantage of by stronger children and subjected to forced prostitution. UNDP is working with Romania to develop gender statistics for the country. USAID should encourage UNDP to include statistics on institutionalized children in their new project.

Labor Redeployment: USAID is both advising the GOR on their labor redeployment policies and providing funding for local economic development programs. The new labor reforms have involved a revision of the unemployment insurance program. It is unclear if a gender analysis was conducted of the new policies to see if they would have differential affects on men and women. The most obvious change affecting women is the reduction of long-term benefits. Because women are over-represented in the ranks of the long-term unemployed, they will be more likely to be the ones losing their benefits. This becomes a particularly acute problem in light of the health care reforms described above which eliminates free health care for all. The reformed unemployment insurance provides for health care benefits only for a limited time. The long-term unemployed will therefore not only lose their unemployment cash transfers, but their access to health care as well. An in-depth gender analysis of the unemployment insurance program would be beneficial in identifying other potential unintended gender-biased impacts of the reforms.

The economic development program provides grants to support the community's priority development projects. The program utilizes participatory techniques to develop community-led committees, which develop and implement the projects. Participation by women on these committees has been 30% on average. It is not clear what methods, if any, have been utilized to encourage women's participation. A study of the methods used would be useful not only in encouraging higher levels of participation by women on future committees, but also to uncover lessons which can be applied to other citizen participation projects, such as the upcoming local government program.

Domestic Violence and Trafficking

Domestic Violence: Domestic violence is an acknowledged problem in Romania (the 2000 Gender Barometer survey funded by the Open Society Foundation Romania noted that over half the female respondents knew someone who was a victim of domestic violence). Domestic violence is a complex issue that requires integrated solutions. In Romania, as in other countries around the globe, victims sometimes fear additional violence from their partner if they report and/or prosecute assaults; they may be pressured by family members not to press charges, or encouraged to reconcile; the police often consider domestic violence a family matter and are unlikely to make an arrest; the procedural requirements to file a complaint in domestic violence and rape cases are involved and place unnecessary burdens on the victims; the abuser often remains at home until the complaint is heard, which could be weeks or even months; and a housing shortage in Romania may force people to stay in an abusive relationship because they have nowhere else to go. A lack of public support for victims, inadequate legislation, untrained and often insensitive police officers, a lack of social, emotional and economic support for victims, and a lack of counseling services for perpetrators are all areas that need to be addressed in order to prevent domestic violence and protect the human rights of the victims.

Trafficking: A related crime of violence against women is trafficking. In response to growing international concern, the US Congress passed the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Act of 2000, which subjects countries to sanctions if they are not meeting minimum standards to address trafficking issues or making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance. The U.S. Department of State determined that Romania has not complied with minimum standards. Romania has therefore been placed in the lowest tier, putting it at risk of sanctions, specifically termination of non-humanitarian, non-trade-related assistance, as well as potential US opposition to development-related assistance from international financial institutions. The United States is already providing significant assistance to Romania to improve their anti-trafficking measures, especially working on cross-border investigations.

Additional support is needed to prevent trafficking from continuing: promoting public awareness, improving legislation, providing support for reintegration of victims, and helping the Romanian government meet the minimum standards required by the Act so that U.S. assistance to Romania is not curtailed.

